

Journal of the Royal Society of Arts

NO. 4908

FRIDAY, 18TH SEPTEMBER, 1953

VOL. CI

THE NOVEL

A series of three Cantor Lectures

I. THE NOVELIST'S TASK

by

DENNIS WHEATLEY

Monday, 27th April, 1953

The *Universal Dictionary* defines the novel as 'a fictitious narrative of some considerable length representing human beings and their actions, adventures and passions, and displaying varieties of human character in relation to life'.

That, you will agree, gives a very wide scope to the novelist. He may write a book such as Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, which was confined to the thoughts of a few people on a single day, a book such as Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, which chronicled the fortunes of a family over several generations, or he may even use reincarnation as a means of portraying the same personalities in different bodies, and against backgrounds many centuries apart.

So far, so good. But the dictionary gives us no help at all if we ask 'What is the purpose of the novel?', and if we are to examine the novelist's task that is certainly one of the things we must discuss.

I suppose most people's instinctive answer to that question would be: to entertain. But that by no means covers the whole field. In Victorian times many novels were written to edify; again, the novel is often used as a vehicle for propaganda. You will recall that several of Dickens's finest works were written with intent to stir the public conscience concerning certain social evils of his day.

I think, though, that all these, and their several combinations, might be covered if we say that the basic purpose of any novel is to engage and hold the attention of its readers.

However, readers are of many types and Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* or Henry Handel Richardson's *Maurice Guest* are hardly calculated to appeal to the considerable modern publics who read exclusively Westerns or whodunits; yet these also come within our definition.

The novelist's first task, therefore, is to decide on the object of the operation he is about to undertake. It is, of course, essential to success that the object should be within the limits of his capabilities; but, bearing both his gifts and shortcomings in mind, he must settle on the type of people he wishes to interest with his book.

Is it to be the more intellectual public that appreciates fine prose and takes pleasure in following the involved ramifications of the human mind; or is it to be some section of the vast public which gets its weekly supply of light literature mainly from what used to be known as the twopenny libraries? If the former, he must concern himself with some unusual personality, the eternal triangle, or a family, and with these people's psychological reactions to certain more or less normal events. If the latter he must take a further decision on what type of action story he should write. In addition to the puzzle-minded and lovers of the broad open spaces, there is the new public for science fiction, and the old one that has a special fondness for the cloak and sword romance. He, or she, can aim to wring the factory girl's heart, or provide strong meat for the reader who delights in peril, espionage, escape and sudden death.

Those admittedly are very arbitrary divisions, as there is a great deal of overlapping between the various publics. Cabinet Ministers have confessed to habitually reading thrillers as an admirable antidote to brain-fag; while we have the evidence of the chain libraries that ever-increasing numbers of comparatively ill-educated people are reading books of a much higher standard, now that these have been brought within their means by the payment of a few pence a week. But such overlapping must normally be regarded as in the nature of a bonus.

Of course, there is a limited number of authors who have succeeded in having the best of both worlds. John Buchan, Graham Greene, Dorothy Sayers, Nevil Shute, Agatha Christie and Francis Iles spring to the mind. All these are not only masters of the action story; through their qualities of writing and characterization they have also become favourites of the public that reads serious books. I, too, have been most fortunate in that respect, but only owing to a most laborious technique which consists of writing two separate books and dovetailing them into one another.

For example, in my book *The Second Seal* I covered the period from April to September, 1914. First I wrote a 100,000 word history of those six world-shaking months, giving all the outstanding facts about the murders at Sarajevo and the diplomatic crisis that led to the outbreak of the First World War, together with an account of the strategy and battles on all fronts up to the major defeats suffered by the Austrian and Russian armies in the East, and ending with the turn of the tide in the West when the Germans were halted at the Battle of the Marne. Then, without altering a single relevant date or fact, I welded into this

account characters of my own invention, making them the vehicles for both a spy story and a love story.

The result was a book which many people who never read thrillers in the ordinary way enjoyed, owing to the interest of the momentous historical events that it described; at the same time it had a wide appeal to thousands who never take a serious book out of their libraries, but were happy to swallow the history because of the thrills and love scenes with which it was interlarded.

So you see, to be a prize essayist is not an essential qualification for having the best of both worlds. I should add, though, that the book ran to 232,000 words. Even with the most ruthless pruning I could not reduce it further. To have done so would have entailed either leaving gaps in the chain of true events or robbing the fiction episodes of much of their suspense. And here I must issue a warning. To-day, any author who writes a long book inflicts certain penalties upon himself. That is the reason for my contention that for most authors the wise course is to select a definite public and go all out for it regardless of any other.

Now a word or two on the question of style. Like many other would-be novelists, before sitting down to my first book I spent some time examining the work of authors who had proved to be best sellers. With innocent optimism I sought the secret of spell-binding by the arrangement of words. Some, I found, favoured paragraphs of a page or more in length and immensely long sentences, while others wrote in short crisp phrases. Soon I realized that my quest was hopeless, and that it is futile for any writer to seek to model himself on another. He must use such abilities as he has to tell his story in his own way. But, even if he is incapable of writing fine English, there are two things that he can do. One is never to use a pretentious word where a simple one will serve; the other is to take pains to make his meaning absolutely clear. Half the success in novel writing lies in leading the reader steadily on, so that he never has to think back, or turn back, to verify what has gone before.

Having settled on his potential public the author must then decide on his theme, and this is obviously a matter of individual taste.

Next comes the question of scene. For the novel of every-day life it is a great advantage for the writer to choose some background which at one time or another he has known intimately. He can then bring in without difficulty many little touches of genuine local colour which will add greatly to the reality of the tale. But in the action story the advantages of knowing the setting of events personally is to some extent debatable.

For my own first novel, *The Forbidden Territory*, I decided to set my story in the Soviet Union. When the book came out we gave a publication party, and I was quite bowled over by several journalists who were there asking me: 'When was it, Mr. Wheatley, that you were last in Russia?' and, of course, I had never been there at all.

On the other hand, a few years later, on returning from three months holiday in South Africa, I wrote *The Fabulous Valley*. During my stay I had visited Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, the North Eastern Transvaal, Durban, Port Elizabeth, East London and Lourenço Marques; so in a search for clues to

the location of a diamond mine I made my characters rush up and down seeing all the sights and visiting all the places to which I had been myself. The result was that a discerning critic wrote of this not a very good tale: 'Mr. Wheatley should have made up his mind whether he meant to write a thriller or a guide-book.' So you see, in that case a first-hand knowledge of my background proved a liability. I had been living with it too recently.

The success of *The Forbidden Territory* and other books of mine such as *The Eunuch of Stamboul* and *The Secret War* show that it is perfectly possible for an author to collect enough local colour to create an accurate background without having been to the country about which he is writing. But it means many hours of delving into travel books, poring over maps and, above all, having long talks with reliable observers who have lived in the country concerned.

In the case of my novels dealing with Black Magic, too, their backgrounds are based not only on very extensive reading but also on data acquired through having taken the trouble to get to know such people as the late Aleister Crowley, the Reverend Montague Summers, Mr. Harry Price, Mr. Rollo Ahmed, and other well-known occultists. I may add that I have never myself participated in any magical ceremony, because I honestly believe that such experiments can prove highly dangerous; but I got a great deal of valuable information from people who have. I don't believe that in his later years Crowley could have harmed a rabbit, but he was fascinating to listen to after I had filled him up with old brandy. I remember, too, once spending a week-end at the house of Montague Summers. To my distress I found that my bedroom was tenanted by the largest spiders I have ever seen; he also kept a fine breed of toads in his garden! But that is by the way.

Reverting to the action story. In spite of my unhappy experience with *The Fabulous Valley*, I am inclined to think that it is a definite advantage for an author to have been to the countries that he describes; and the fact that I have travelled fairly extensively has certainly saved me a great deal of time in research.

We now come to the question of plot. Here the methods of authors differ enormously. Many writers of psychological novels select their principal characters, then simply let those characters do the work for them. But in order to do that it is first necessary for the author to know his brain-children really intimately, so that in a given event he is instantly aware how each of them would react to it. Through those reactions the story continues to tell itself until the novelist decides that the major problem which confronts them has worked itself out.

Most successful novelists of this kind put in an immense amount of work before they start to write their books, as they build up each character, either in their minds or more frequently actually on paper, from birth to the point at which the story starts. The greater part of this material never appears in the book at all, but by visualizing the childhood, school-days and early adult life of his characters the author comes to know them as real people, and it is that which enables him to make the reader take an eager interest in their fortunes.

The action novelist rarely goes to these pains. That is why the characters in

most light fiction lack depth and genuine personality; but any author who gives time to creating a life history for his characters will undoubtedly write a very much better book.

However, unlike the writer of psychological novels, the author of action stories cannot afford to let his plot weave itself. His book has to have a definite structure, and two things he should aim for are a good beginning and a good end. It is of the first importance that in the opening chapters, or preferably chapter, he should clearly present a gripping situation. His principal characters must be confronted with some menace to their lives or happiness, be called on to avert some terrible disaster, or to undertake some exciting quest. Only so can he hope firmly to engage the attention of his readers.

The end is of as much, or perhaps even more importance. And that, of course, is where so many whodunits fall down. After the cat has been let out of the bag the reader is still expected to wade through another ten thousand words of explanation. If the *dénouement* can be kept to the very last page, and it is a good one, the reader's next thought after finishing the book will be, 'I must get hold of another book by this author'.

The middle of every book consists of a series of episodes, and the more it resembles a game of snakes and ladders the more likely it is to hold the reader's interest. But it is here that the subject takes charge of the serious novelist. Those who write for the indiscriminate are faced with no problem. They are content to leave character and background sketchy. Having erected a barrier of class or circumstances between two nice young people, they do not seek to probe their mentalities beyond the normal amorous urge. Or, paying small regard to plausibility, they rely on a succession of unadorned stabblings and shootings to fulfil the promise of a lurid jacket. Such stories can easily be told in what, for that type of thing, has become the conventional eighty thousand words.

Occasionally, too, a short novel of outstanding quality appears: for instance, Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and James Hilton's *Goodbye Mr. Chips*. But such books are exceptions. Generally speaking the psychological novel demands considerable length for the proper development of its characters and its readers would suffer a severe disappointment if it were brought to a premature end just as they are getting to know and appreciate those characters fully.

This problem of length also confronts the author of the action story who, like myself, aims to give the reader something more than a mere catalogue of killings. To illustrate this I will refer for a moment to my historical novels. But first it might interest some of you to hear an instance of how extraneous events can change a novelist's medium, and why for a time I abandoned my stories of modern international intrigue to write period pieces.

During the early years of the late war I wrote my best known spy stories, featuring Gregory Sallust. I also wrote, for private circulation only, a number of military papers which found their way to the Chiefs of Staff. As a result of those papers, I had the honour, at the end of 1941, to be specially commissioned so that I might become a member of the Joint Planning Staff of the War Cabinet. For

the following three years, disguised as a Wing Commander, I worked in the famous fortress basement under Mr. Churchill's war-time quarters; and there my work made it necessary for me to be informed of all the major secrets concerning the high direction of the war.

While writing my spy stories I was still a free agent. By careful sifting of a mass of information which was available to any member of the public, and a certain amount of intelligent guessing, I had been able to achieve a fair degree of accuracy for their backgrounds. Whereas once I was in uniform I no longer had to guess, because it was part of my job to read the Foreign Office telegrams every morning; but I became subject to the Official Secrets Act. Naturally I had no time to write novels during the years that I was thinking of invasions, but it became a worrying thought that I was going to be terribly handicapped if I wrote any more Gregory Sallust stories after the war.

In due course the war ended, and my wife and I were at last able to leave London for Lymington where, only a few months earlier, we had bought a pleasant old Georgian house. Before I had been living in it for long I realized that it offered the perfect setting for the opening of an historical novel. Obviously a series of them was the answer to my problem of how to avoid the risk of being popped into the Tower of London; and that was how Roger Brook came to be born.

It was this new venture which brought home to me more clearly than ever before the fact that the subject of a book dictates its length to the author. Of course, he can take some episode and write a romance round it in the conventional eighty thousand words, but if he wishes to give the reader a full, authentic picture of the period in which the action is set, that is out of the question.

Having sent Roger as a boy to France, and later to the Courts of Denmark, Sweden and Catherine the Great of Russia, I brought him to the year 1789. In May of that year the French Revolution opened. Its first phase may be termed the Liberal Revolution. That ended in October, 1790. It was not till August, 1792, after nineteen months of uneasy quiet, that the second phase, which may be termed the Bolshevik Revolution, began. That ended with the fall of Robespierre in July, 1794. Obviously, as there were two distinct revolutions they offered two subjects: neither more nor less.

It was my aim to produce stories of high adventure which should at the same time embody every relevant fact from start to finish about those revolutions. That meant that in addition to recording the progress of events in Paris, I had also to cover the opening of the Revolutionary Wars, and the counter-revolutions which broke out in the South of France, Lyons and the Vendée. The result was two books each a quarter of a million words in length.

The sales of those books at their first published price brought me—and incidentally the Government—a lot of money; so the point I am about to make is no personal grumble. But it is here that I must repeat that the author who writes long books inflicts a penalty upon himself. It is not that the public dislikes long books; on the contrary there is good evidence to show that it prefers a story into which it can really get its teeth. But, unfortunately, in spite of the great

additional labour entailed in writing a long book, our present economics are in favour of an author making much more money by writing a short one.

To-day, for a new author to start by writing a long book is greatly to add to the risk of it remaining still-born. The costs of production have risen so steeply that most publishers would now refuse a book of over a hundred thousand words, unless the manuscript was one which they felt to be absolutely outstanding, or by an author who had already established a reputation enabling them to spread their costs over a big first printing and count on best-seller sales.

Even given publication, the author of a long book now stands to lose a large part of his potential remuneration, for the following reasons:

First, the attitude of certain of the Subscription Libraries. With at least one of the oldest and most revered, the pre-war system by which an 'A' subscription guaranteed the subscriber any book within reason on demand, no longer operates. To an 'A' subscriber they will supply any fiction book published up to a price of 10s. 6d., and they do take considerable numbers of the books which have to be published at higher prices. But in the case of a popular author all the copies they have taken go within a few days of publication. Then, any 'A' subscriber who has not been among the early applicants is told that a copy of the book will be got for him—but only if he is prepared to pay a surcharge of the difference between 10s. 6d. and the published price. Naturally, few subscribers are willing to pay in addition to their subscription another 2s., or perhaps 4s. 6d., just to read a book which they must afterwards return to the library. It would, of course, be stupid for authors of long books to bear resentment against the libraries on this account, as they are forced to their present policy by economics, but the fact remains that this restricted circulation seriously affects the sales of long books.

Secondly, there are the Book Clubs. In my own case, my good friend Miss Christina Foyle, who is giving the third in this series of lectures, has done me the kindness to reprint at least half a dozen of my novels in a special edition for her many thousands of Club members. So, too, have the Universal Book Club. But with the best will in the world neither of them can give their members my longer books. Economically that is impossible.

Thirdly, we come to the cheap editions. Every publisher wishes to reprint any successful book to bring it within the means of as many people as possible. But the costs on a 250,000-word book prohibit it being reissued at less than 7s. 6d.; so the vast market below that figure has to be written off as a loss.

Personally, I find it distressing that while some of my least good books should be reprinted again and again by the hundred thousand merely because they are short, several of my best books must remain beyond the means of the vast public that can afford to pay only half-a-crown. And, of course, if I were a new author and started by writing those long books to-day, it is quite on the cards that they would never be published at all.

Some people may say: 'After all, they are only thrillers, so that would be no great loss'. But I like to flatter myself that they are not altogether a valueless contribution to our literature, if only from their educative aspect. As my detailed

and accurate accounts of the French Revolution, of the opening of the First World War, of the Spanish Civil War, of the Abyssinian War, and so on, appeared in the guise of exciting fiction, many thousands of young people have read them. It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that those who have done so, now know far more about these great historical events than they could possibly do from the sketchy outline of them which is all they would receive at any ordinary school.

Be that as it may: what of the long books that have a real claim to quality? One thinks of Walpole's *Rogue Herries* novels, of Francis Brett Young's *Portrait of Clare*, John Cowper Powys's *A Glastonbury Romance*, of *Jete Süss*, *Gone with the Wind*, and the first four novels of Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. If the present situation continues, when new authors arise who are capable of giving us such masterpieces, they may be lost to the world because it will be hopelessly uneconomical to write them; and that would be a major tragedy.

What can be done to avert it? The problem cannot be altogether a new one, as despite the cheap labour and materials of Victorian times, the publishers of that era apparently found it necessary to bring out their longer novels in two or more volumes. There is, I believe, a certain prejudice in the trade against a reversion to this form of publishing, but perhaps that might be overcome. In any case, when my old friend Mr. Michael Joseph gives the second talk in this series, it would be most interesting if he could give us his views on this really important question of means by which the long novel can be saved from extinction.

Long or short, however, I think there are certain qualities the majority of which a novelist must either have or cultivate if he is to produce really fine work. They are:

Imagination. This, of course, is a natural gift.

Observation. This can be acquired by self-training.

Integrity. This is of great importance. Many gifted authors who have become embittered because their sales have proved disappointing, have, tongue in cheek, decided to write a thriller or a slop romance, but rarely if ever have they pulled it off. An author must believe in his characters.

Craftsmanship. For this a classical education is an enormous asset, and I have never ceased to regret my own ignorance of the learned tongues. However, another great aid to it is extensive reading of fine literature. That trains the mind to reject the vulgar; so that even those who are not born with good taste can acquire it by this means.

General Knowledge. Here reading of all kinds is of value, as everything read goes into the subconscious. Even if only one-thousandth part can be remembered, it is usually possible to recall the book in which certain passages appeared, so that when writing upon a similar subject it is easy to refer to that particular book again.

Lastly, discipline, and with it, concentration. It is no good waiting to write until the spirit moves one. An author should observe regular hours of work and allow nothing to distract him from his job. It is rare to meet a successful author

who finds his work easy. Best-sellers are not just gaily knocked off on a typewriter or the finished article produced by a few hours dictation a day. Every sentence has to be gone over again and again.

When I sit down to a book I endeavour to put aside everything else that is not really urgent, so that I am able to live in my story. I have found that if I can flop into bed at night still thinking about it I wake in the morning with the next scene crying out to be written. Having tried many methods, my own experience is that, in the long run, it is quickest to write in pencil and rub out as I go. I work six days a week and from ten to twelve hours a day. Even so, in a day I rarely manage to write more than two thousand words; but those two thousand need very little further correction.

Now, I have talked quite enough about my own books, and I should like to mention to you a few really great ones. For many years I have collected modern first editions and round about 1930 I decided to form a small special collection of the very best. I therefore asked a dozen of London's leading booksellers to make lists for me of what, in their opinion, were the twenty most outstanding novels that had been published since the beginning of the century.

Their lists showed an extraordinary similarity. With few exceptions the first ten or twelve titles on each were the same; so by increasing the collection to a little over thirty it could hardly be doubted that the most outstanding twenty were among them.

All the lists included:

1. Arnold Bennett's *The Old Wives Tale*
2. Norman Douglas's *South Wind*
3. Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*
4. John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*
5. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*
6. D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*
7. Hugh Walpole's *Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill*
8. Joseph Conrad's *Victory*
9. H. G. Wells's *Tono Bungay*; although to represent this author several favoured *Love and Mr. Lewisham*

Nearly all the lists included:

10. James Joyce's *Ulysses*
11. Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*
12. Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*
13. W. H. Hudson's *Green Mansions*
14. J. M. Barrie's *The Little White Bird*
15. Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*
16. James Branch Cabell's *Jurgen*
17. Compton Mackenzie's *Sinister Street*
18. G. K. Chesterton's *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*

Several lists included:

19. George Gissing's *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*
20. Henry Handel Richardson's *Maurice Guest*

21. Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson*
22. Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*
23. C. E. Montague's *A Hind Let Loose*
24. William McFee's *Casuals of the Sea*
25. George Douglas's *The House with the Green Shutters*
26. David Graham Phillips's *Susan Lennox*
27. William de Morgan's *Joseph Vance*
28. R. H. Mottram's *The Spanish Farm*
29. Gilbert Frankau's *Peter Jackson, Cigar Merchant*
30. Theodore Dreiser's *The Genius*
31. Margaret Kennedy's *The Constant Nymph*
32. E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*
33. Rose Macaulay's *Told by an Idiot* and
34. F. Rolfe's *Hadrian the Seventh*

It must be remembered that these lists were made in 1930, and at that time, Howard Spring, James Hilton, Aldous Huxley, Charles Morgan, Daphne du Maurier, Rebecca West, Norman Collins, V. Sackville West, C. S. Forester, Cronin, Priestley, Hemingway, Steinbeck, and several other now famous authors, whose names we should expect to find on many lists were they re-made to-day, had not then achieved their present degree of literary eminence.

I will close by saying that should there be anyone here to-night who is contemplating writing a novel, I wish them the same success as those distinguished authors I have mentioned, in this exacting but fascinating task.

It remains only for me to express my deep appreciation of the great honour that the Royal Society of Arts has done me in selecting me to deliver a Cantor Lecture on this subject.

II. THE FUNCTION OF THE PUBLISHER

by

MICHAEL JOSEPH

Chairman and Managing Director, Messrs. Michael Joseph, Ltd.

Monday, 4th May, 1953

Last Monday you heard Mr. Dennis Wheatley speak about the novel. Now, Mr. Wheatley's approach to the novel is very different from, shall we say, that of Mr. Joyce Cary or Miss Rose Macaulay. Mr. Wheatley is a very successful writer because he is Mr. Wheatley. Authors are as different and individual as fingerprints.

So it is to a great extent with publishers. All I can do this evening is to tell you as clearly and as honestly as I can what my conception is of the function of the publisher. Other publishers would no doubt see it in a different light.

Publishers have no common background or training like solicitors or architects and it is not surprising that you find a considerable variety of outlook and philosophy among them. On the whole I think publishers are respectable, not because of their culture or academic background but because most of them respect good work, when they can recognize it. I think it is true that most publishers would rather sell 10,000 copies of a good book than 20,000 of a bad one.

Publishers have not always been considered respectable. In the early days, when the publisher was also a bookseller, there was some quite deplorable profiteering at the author's expense. Authors often sold their copyrights for small sums. *Paradise Lost* changed hands for £5; and although the publisher paid Milton another £5 when the work was reprinted and a further £8 to Milton's widow, a total of £18 cannot be called handsome, even when we take into account the difference in the value of money in 1667 as compared with to-day.

But publishing gradually became a more honourable and fair-dealing profession, certainly more generous in the financial treatment of authors. In 1868 a publisher offered Benjamin Disraeli £10,000 for a novel (which he refused) and twelve years earlier Macaulay received from Longmans a cheque for £20,000 on account of the profits of the third and fourth volumes of his *History*.

Anyone who wants to trace the history of book publishing is advised to read F. A. Mumby's *Publishing and Bookselling*, published by Jonathan Cape, which is the classic work on the subject. To-day publishing is a complicated and competitive affair: complicated because we now have to deal with all kinds of subsidiary rights; and competitive because publishers are both more numerous and anxious to outbid each other for writers of talent.

I suppose it is possible for someone to go into publishing in order to make money and realize his ambition. Indeed I am pretty sure it can be done if one is prepared to pander to the weaknesses of human nature. The majority of publishers do realize, however dimly, that they have a responsibility to society and are only too glad to fulfil it, provided always that they can keep their business a going concern. The profit motive is not paramount in publishing.

I know a few firms which have prospered for many years—I am sure you will not expect me to mention any names—by publishing books which by no stretch of the imagination could be described as a contribution to literature. These publishers are cheerfully indifferent to all literary quality. I doubt if any of the publishers I am thinking of has ever read a classic unless it was prescribed reading in his school days. Yet they would be dismayed if they were accused of publishing tripe. Their answer no doubt would be that they are giving the public or a certain section of it what it wants—and why not?

That is one conception of the function of a publisher. Others are in publishing because they can in a sense express themselves by it. Their books are a reflection of their own personality and outlook. And I am sure there are publishers who consider that they have a mission. Perhaps that is an exaggerated way of putting it but if I am right it would at least account for some of the very odd books which do get published.

When you survey an occupation which is both a profession and a business

carried on by men (curiously few women—I have never been able to understand why) who are either tradesmen or artists or something of both, you must expect to find differences in both theory and practice. Anyhow, I do not think that any one publisher can give you a representative view of his trade for, like authorship, it is a very personal business.

Let me begin by eliminating special areas of publishing, where the function of the publisher is more or less stereotyped. A firm which produces nothing but school books, or technical handbooks, works in a specialized market where there are none of the problems which face the general publisher. They ferry their books across smooth water, from author to reader; calling at the paper merchant, printer and binder on their way. They hardly ever have to deal with literary agents or commercial lending libraries. They have their own problems, of course, but they do not have to worry about reviews or advertising appropriations, the dangers of libel, book club choices, film rights, serial rights, the B.B.C. or the major problems of printing orders and publication prices. They know, within set limits, where they stand. Above all they do not have to deal, almost daily, with the two biggest publishing problems of all—the temperamental author and the capricious public.

It is the function of the general publisher that I invite you to consider—the publisher who produces books of general interest, chiefly for the reader in search of entertainment: biography, books of travel and exploration, humour, essays, political books, children's books, and in particular fiction; for it is the novel we are now concerned with. There are at least sixty well-known firms of general publishers in London alone, with an annual output ranging from about twelve titles in the case of the 'smallest firms to about two hundred and fifty from the biggest. The majority of their novels are of ephemeral interest and are published unprofitably. The publisher knows that he must rely for his profit, and indeed for his survival, on the relatively few successful books he produces.

At this point I may perhaps remind you that publishers are not altogether to blame for sponsoring so many failures. For this there are two reasons. The economy of publishing obliges a publisher to aim at a large turnover, which means that he must publish in a year the best twenty or fifty or hundred books that come his way. He has certain fixed expenses to meet: his office rent and overheads, wages, and so on. Each book he publishes has to bear a proportion of this burden: and theoretically at least the more books he publishes the easier it is to spread out his financial commitments. The second reason is that however good his judgement may be, he cannot tell before publication which books will yield a profit and which will show a loss. In this sense publishing is a hazardous business. And without any doubt the novel is the most hazardous aspect of publishing.

Let us imagine that we are, in the traditional phrase, 'commencing publisher'. We first have to find some manuscripts to publish. No one in his senses would launch a publishing firm without some contacts with authors and their agents and some knowledge and practical experience of the processes of book production. And if we are going to publish novels we must not only like novels, we must also know something about this honourable and flourishing branch of English letters.

Without some acquaintance with the best of English fiction, I do not see how any publisher can hope to assess the quality of present-day novels. Many publishers, I fear, fall regrettably short of this standard. It is a frightening thought that if anyone were to take the trouble to type out, say, *The Mill on the Floss*, or even one of Thomas Hardy's novels, changing the title and the names of the characters, and submit it as an original work to some present-day publishers, I doubt if it would be recognized. Worse still, I am afraid it would collect rejection slips.

If we all made a point of reading, or re-reading, the classics on our shelves in between reading new manuscripts we should be less inclined to the belief that our discoveries are masterpieces. Publishers can be excused for believing that most of their geese are swans but the truth, and we ought to face it, is that nearly all the novels we publish have at most only an entertainment value. Of the novels published every year in this country I doubt if more than fifty are worth a second reading, let alone an abiding place on anyone's bookshelf.

However, we do not stop opening oysters because only one in every hundred thousand or so has a pearl in it, and any publisher of novels is committed to publishing in quantity.

The first thing to be said is that every novel is a business in itself. It may begin as an idea originating either with the publisher or with the author. Or its history, so far as the publisher is concerned, may begin on the day when a manuscript appears on his desk. Has it any merit? Is it saleable as a book? The author may have put his heart and soul into that manuscript, he may have devoted many months or even years to the writing of it, but these are the questions the publisher has to answer. The answer is usually No. I shudder to think of the innumerable manuscripts which make their melancholy and fruitless journey from one publishing office to another. The books which fill the shops and libraries are only the visible part of the iceberg; the submerged eight-ninths are the unpublished and for the most part unpublishable. Yet it is in dealing with the rejected author that the publisher's function really begins. It is easy to attach a printed rejection slip to an unwanted manuscript, but if the author shows promise, how much wiser it is to write encouragingly. Publishers should read and re-read chapter XI, verse 1 of Ecclesiastes. In case anyone does not recognize the reference, it begins 'Cast thy bread upon the waters'.

But let us suppose that the manuscript passes the first test. The publisher reads it, or has a favourable report from one of his staff or from a professional reader, and decides that it is worth publishing. What is the next step?

Here is one test for the publisher. Does he establish contact with the author? Or does he concern himself only with formal arrangements for the book's publication? Some publishers believe—and there is something to be said for their point of view—that the less they have to do with authors, the better. I knew one publisher who always declared that if he wasted his time seeing authors he would never get any work done.

This is a view to which I do not subscribe. I believe that to do his job thoroughly a publisher must be in close personal sympathy with an author and his work. He must be prepared to criticize, to help in revising a book, to make,

whenever it is needed, a constructive, even a creative contribution to the books he publishes. He should get to know his authors, not only to get the best out of them but to earn their loyalty and if possible their respect. Nothing is more important, in my view, than the relationship between author and publisher. It transcends all contracts and all business arrangements. It is the foundation of the best kind of publishing success.

It is not easy. Authors, as I said at the beginning, are individuals. Some are modest, some are not. A few are intelligent. Many are temperamental. I sometimes think that a publisher and a trainer of race horses have a great deal in common. Some authors are selling platers, but does that matter so long as they win races? Others are potential classic winners and have to be carefully nursed for success. Which reminds me that the late Lord Rosebery, speaking at a literary dinner, declared that authors were like racehorses: they should be fed, he said, but not fattened.

Perhaps a better analogy would be for the publisher to regard his authors as a large family of adopted children. They are like children in many ways; all smiles one minute, tears the next; unreasonable, greedy, charming, pig-headed, suspicious, trusting and unpredictable. They are an unruly family, all clamouring for attention at the same time; but a source of immense satisfaction if you can steer them through their teething and their growing pains. But in one respect they are not like children. They are like Peter Pan, for they never grow up.

But I must not be too frivolous about authors. If many of them talk like poor Poll a few may write like angels and the real arbiter of a publisher's success—the public—judges them not by what they are but by what they write.

With the mechanics of book production I will not concern myself in this talk. Obviously a publisher must have considerable technical knowledge. Ideally, he is a craftsman as well as a good man of business. He must have an eye for lay-out, and he must know how and where to buy paper: he must know enough about printing and binding to get his books well and economically printed and bound. He must know where to find suitable artists for illustration and wrapper designs. Between the best and the worst in book production there is a wide margin: and it is enough to say that part and a not inconsiderable part of the function of a publisher is the ability to turn a manuscript into a good-looking book.

Choosing the right books to publish, establishing a happy relationship with authors, and producing the books themselves in a creditable format are only part, however, of a publisher's responsibilities.

A publisher is also a salesman, in theory at least. I am afraid I only half-heartedly believe, if I believe at all, that a publisher can sell books. I ought not to admit this since there are probably some authors listening to me this evening, and I know only too well that what an author wants or thinks he wants is a publisher who can sell his books. But the truth is that there is very little to choose between one publisher and another when it comes to selling books.

If you were to trace the history of the outstandingly successful books of our time, you would find that they appeared under the imprints of all sorts of publishers, big and small, well-known firms and firms hardly known at all.

When a best-seller like *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* makes its appearance—I quote this example deliberately because it was published by a small firm, now no longer in existence—it does not matter who the publisher is. On the other hand, a well-known imprint does ensure for a book the all-important start: simply because the trade, by which I mean the booksellers and libraries throughout the Empire, will support a good publisher's productions by ordering in advance of publication. A good imprint on a book also means that booksellers and librarians, literary editors and reviewers will pay more attention to the books. None of this, however, ensures that the public will respond and it is the public which always decides the fate of a book.

A book may have columns of ecstatic praise from reviewers, it may be boldly and extensively advertised, it may appear to have everything in its favour, but if the public do not want it, it will flop. Again and again books have succeeded without benefit of publicity and in spite of the publisher's lack of enthusiasm.

Now I deliberately use that phrase 'publisher's lack of enthusiasm' because I am going to cite an example from my own experience as a publisher. In 1941 my firm published a book which we accepted because we wanted to keep the author in our list, and for no other reason. Before the war we had published an adventure story by this American writer and because I liked it (although it had only a very moderate sale) I decided to publish the new manuscript. It was very short and in those days everybody was sure that there was no market for very short books. The usual review copies went out. It had only $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches of advertising listed with other books and only twelve reviews appeared in the first six months. It was ignored by all the important newspapers and weeklies, nine of the twelve reviews were in provincial papers and the majority were short notices. The author's reputation was then negligible and the advance sale was very small. It was what we had expected. Yet after this dismal start, and, I assure you, with no effort whatever on our part, the book miraculously, as it seemed, began to sell. That was *The Snow Goose*, of which over 750,000 copies have now been sold in the British Empire alone. And it still goes on selling itself.

One of the most distinguished and intelligent American publishers I ever met, George Doran (and I do not call him intelligent because he takes the same view as I do) wrote: 'Some years ago I was interested in the publication of a startling and sensational book on the new condition in China at the height of the Boxer Rebellion. Newspaper space that could not have been bought for fifty thousand dollars was devoted to its announcement and promotion. We printed twenty-five thousand copies. We sold less than two thousand. The public did not want that book. Years later there came to my desk a modest little book in advance page proofs. It was accompanied by a letter of commendation from my friend Frank Swinnerton. I took it home, read it aloud, and liked it well enough to cable acceptance and order a first printing of five thousand. They disappeared like snow before a summer sun, as soon as the public sensed the book's novelty and humour. We continued printing, just about keeping up with the demand, until within three months almost two hundred and fifty thousand copies had been sold. That book was *The Young Visitors*, by Daisy Ashford, with an introduction

by Sir James Barrie. That book the public wanted. Relatively no advertising was done for it'.

Publishers have tried again and again to sell their books by advertising, by pressure—seldom successful—on literary editors and reviewers, and by coaxing the booksellers to stock their books. Sometimes such promotion does appear to be successful, but there have been so many failures that anyone who counts on results is, I am sure, deceiving himself. When you see a successful book advertised you may be pretty sure that the publisher is cheerfully advertising his success, or rather his good luck, in order to impress the book trade—and perhaps annoy other publishers.

Reviews are a different matter although, as I have said, they often make little or no difference. It is dangerous to draw conclusions in the book trade. When a successful novel gets a chorus of praise from reviewers, it may only mean that the critics agree with the reading public. To infer that reviews are responsible for the book's sale is to believe that the tail is wagging the dog.

Yet reviews can be influential in certain circumstances. It was undoubtedly Arnold Bennett's review of *Jew Süss* which ensured the success of that novel. In countries where the lending library system does not operate on a big scale the effect of reviews can most readily be seen. In Australia and New Zealand, for instance, a prominent review of a book—not necessarily a favourable one—will bring hundreds of orders into the local bookshops even before copies of the book have reached them.

The publisher welcomes reviews of his novels, not only because of the beneficial effect they sometimes have on sales but also because they help to create, or maintain, the impression that his publications are worth editorial notice. And, of course, they please authors, who naturally take a more subjective view. No experienced publisher allows himself to be carried away by enthusiastic praise, nor is he dismayed, as authors usually are, by adverse criticism. I have heard publishers quoting, with relish, the review, in two lines, of a certain famous American author's recent novel. The reviewer wrote 'Having once put down Mr. So-and So's novel, I could not pick it up'.

A sensible appreciation of advertising and reviews is an important part of a publisher's function. It is easy to be deceived by favourable publicity: on the other hand, it is a publisher's business to neglect no opportunity of promoting the interests of his authors. An author's reputation can be built up to some extent on publicity, even if it does not directly sell books. Before I leave the subject of advertising and reviews, and in case anyone listening to me may think that I have a bee in my bonnet about their exaggerated effect on sales, let me invite you to look at your own books and see how many novels there are on your shelves which you bought as a direct result of reading a review or a publisher's advertisement.

I think I know what sells books and I am safe in saying this because I cannot possibly profit by it. It is word of mouth recommendation. I claim no credit for this discovery. It is an elementary truth of publishing. Mr. Frank Swinnerton who, as author and publisher, knows far more about the book trade than I ever

shall, once said: 'If any author asks any publisher what it is that sells books, he will hear from each and every publisher the same reply: "It is TALK."'

If I were a novelist I would much rather have people at dinner tables, or in trains and buses, talking about my new novel, than a whole page advertisement in *The Times Literary Supplement*. But it is clearly necessary to advertise, for several good reasons. In spite of what I have just said, no author will believe that advertising is not good for his work and reputation. When an author has a following it is of course necessary to remind the faithful that a new book by their favourite is about to appear. And advertising is one way for a publisher to demonstrate his solvency and activities to an always critical and sometimes suspicious tribe of authors and literary agents, who have the disposal of many of next year's profitable books.

I still think, however, that the producers of plays are more realistic than publishers of books. Apart from small classified announcements giving the name of the theatre, the title of the play and perhaps the names of one or two well-known actors and actresses, they do not waste time and money on costly press advertising. They know that the verdict rests with the public. Good notices of plays, like the few really influential reviews of books, are another matter; but it must be remembered that the reviewer is in some degree representative of the public and it still remains true that if the public differ with a reviewer, the book must fail.

I do not therefore regard salesmanship as a major part of the publisher's functions. He can sometimes sell subsidiary rights, to the author's advantage and his own, such as serial rights or American rights, but when it comes to selling a book to its readers there is very little he can do, if anything. All he can hope for, as I said earlier, is an advance sale, before publication, to booksellers who have confidence in his judgement and imprint.

Perhaps the most important marketing aspect for a publisher is an understanding of the conditions in which novels are published and bought. The life of a novel is usually very short. In the first place, a great many novels are published—more than eighty every week. This is roughly twice as many as are published in the United States, with its much larger population. Certainly not all novels are sold in quantity over the bookseller's counter. Many are regarded, and perhaps deliberately published, as 'library' novels.

Now the lending libraries are both an advantage and a disadvantage to the publisher and author. It is true that many authors would not find a publisher if it were not for the support of the libraries, which to some extent underwrite the publisher's risk. If there were no circulating libraries fewer novels would be published and the sales of those novels would probably increase, in terms of actual copies sold. But the number of readers would decrease enormously, for we in this country have the borrowing habit. 'No Englishman buys a book he can borrow.'

Inevitably there is a conflict of interest between the publisher and author on the one hand and the library on the other. The publisher wants to sell as many copies of his books as he can. The library depends for its profit on buying as

few books as are necessary to keep its subscribers satisfied. In recent years there has been a marked increase in the demand for current fiction at the public libraries: and this represents a drift from the commercial lending libraries whose subscription rates the public are finding it increasingly difficult to afford. This trend has created a serious new problem for the publisher, for local authorities' funds are limited and many public librarians are now protesting that it is not their business to supply recreational reading. The danger, to put it shortly, is that the public will turn to other forms of entertainment.

Television is to-day regarded as the chief enemy of reading. I am not so seriously alarmed by this menace as are some of my colleagues. True, you cannot watch a television screen and read a book at the same time; but the day before yesterday broadcasting was proclaimed the danger to books. It was also argued that wireless would kill the sale of sheet music and gramophone records; but in fact broadcasting has stimulated and increased their sales. Television is still very much a novelty and as a form of entertainment it is in its infancy. Publishers should not fight against television but regard it as a potential ally. As with sound radio, there can be reviews of books, dramatized excerpts, serial versions of novels. This is a development which every intelligent publisher will do all he can to promote.

Books have to compete all the time with other forms of entertainment. Where rivals such as television do not yet exist there is, I am glad to say, a strong and increasing demand for books. I am thinking of the overseas market, chiefly New Zealand, Australia and South Africa. The export of British books increased steadily even during the war years and rose from a little over three million pounds in 1937 to well over thirteen million pounds in 1951. Last year, 1952, about forty per cent of all gross sales were made overseas, an increase of 2.8 per cent over 1951.

These statistics are impressive enough. They surely indicate that the publisher should take full advantage of this growing demand abroad. Although I have said that a publisher cannot do much to sell his books, I make an important exception in the case of overseas trading. In my view a close study of overseas conditions and requirements is an important part of a publisher's job.

To recapitulate, I consider that the publisher has his biggest role to play before publication of a book. His decisions before publication, on everything from title, price, wrapper design, and format to the timing of publication may be of major importance. After publication, he can only steer the ship on its uncharted course. The fair winds of public favour or the rocks and storms of public disapproval or indifference cannot be predicted.

The publisher can give his publications the hall-mark of his imprint, he can co-operate intelligently, perhaps even skilfully, with the bookseller, the agent, with editors and the B.B.C.; he can encourage his authors and run his business efficiently—but the result depends on the book itself. The author is the primary producer, and let us not forget it.

The publisher is an *entrepreneur*. The publisher of novels is also a gambler. He walks a daily tight-rope as he risks his capital: coping with authors, artists,

printers, binders, production problems and office administration. He does not do everything single-handed, of course, but he cannot live in seclusion thinking only of future books and saying Yes or No to manuscripts.

The life of a publisher is full of surprises. There are many disappointments—it was Grant Richards, one of the publishing geniuses of our time, who called it 'a brave business, but bitter.' But there are a few moments of rare satisfaction and achievement. It is a crowded and sometimes exhausting life, but it is always a challenge and for those who have the right temperament it can be exhilarating and immensely satisfying.

III. THE BOOKSELLER AND THE READING PUBLIC

by

CHRISTINA FOYLE

A Director of Foyle's Bookshop

Monday, 11th May, 1953

Mr. Dennis Wheatley and Mr. Michael Joseph already have told you of the problems that beset the writer and the publisher of novels. Mr. Joseph once confided in me that everyone he ever met turned out to be an author. People he looked upon as personal friends and with whom he could relax and forget all about business sooner or later revealed confidentially that they had a manuscript: 'It won't take more than an evening or two to read it'.

The bookseller has his problems, too—of another kind entirely. Bookselling has always been a hazardous affair. The power of the printed word was early recognized and, in harsher times, many a bookseller lost his ears or even his life for selling something that displeased authority. In the eighteenth century punishment was milder, but many a bookseller found himself in prison for selling pamphlets that ridiculed the monarchy. Even in the nineteenth century, Vizitelly, a Shaftesbury Avenue bookseller, went to gaol for six months for selling Zola's novels. Ironically, Zola himself came to England shortly after the prosecution and was publicly welcomed by the Attorney-General at a dinner attended by the most distinguished men of letters of the day.

We booksellers do not have troubles of this kind to-day. Retaining our reason in face of the great flood of new books is our problem. One feels like Canute trying to hold back the waves. Books, unlike any other commodity, are of infinite variety, and any bookseller worthy of the name wishes to satisfy every customer's wants. How to do this without a shop the size of the British Museum is our eternal problem. However, there is an endless fascination in bookselling, even more than in publishing, because for a publisher there are two entirely different kinds of books, his own and other publishers, whereas the bookseller can be all things to all books.

The home of the book trade in London is the Charing Cross Road—famous

as the worst road, both architecturally and morally, in the world, yet with a curious attraction all its own. Here come hundreds of people daily, the famous, the infamous, the eccentric—all possessing one thing in common, the love of books which, like the love of animals or music, is born in one. Like all natural gifts, it knows no class distinction. Booksellers are book-lovers, too, and hate to be parted from their books, especially if they serve a double purpose in propping up the shop, and very unpopular is the customer who wants the bottom one. It is only of recent years that the masses have become book buyers, realizing that, if one wants to know anything, one should try books first.

A bookseller in Central London must have an encyclopædic knowledge. People want advice on everything. All day long we are asked such questions as 'Where is Madame Tussaud's?', 'Can I evict a lodger because he plays the violin?', or 'What play shall I take my relations from Manchester to see?'. Naturally he is expected to be an authority on all literary questions, such as: 'Which is the best book Daphne du Maurier ever wrote?' or 'Which is the better book, *London Belongs to Me* or *How Green Was My Valley*?'. The best method of answering these questions is to find out the customer's opinion in conversation, and then to agree with him. Our telephones ring incessantly and people do not confine their enquiries to books. One lady rings every Wednesday, apologizing for troubling us, but 'is the barrow boy on the corner selling bananas?'

Popular fiction, being a large part of a bookseller's day-to-day business, will always have a prominent position on the main display tables in the shop. To many readers the novel means only a romantic love story. An assistant, on being asked for a book whose title is unfamiliar to him, will ask if it is a novel, and the customer may reply, 'Oh, no, it is a story that might be true'. Wives will buy their husbands an adventurous story like *The Caine Mutiny* as a present, but would very much resent its being described as a novel. Western fans would consider Zane Grey insulted if his books were described as novels.

Whatever one thinks of these perhaps peculiar distinctions, some method of classifying novels is essential and they fall into four groups—detective stories, Western and adventure stories, light romance, and general fiction. Every one of these sections can be broken down into many sub-divisions, for example, the technique of a writer like Ellery Queen is clearly very different from that of, say, Peter Cheyney, and an avid reader of one will never read the other. The demand for the very latest book is often surprising. People have an obsession that anything six months' old is out of date and not worth reading.

Although crime stories are read by a larger section of the public than any other type of fiction, lovers of Westerns are the most voracious readers, a book an evening being quite usual. Detective story reading has always been the normal recreation of noble minds and English thrillers are as famous and successful an English 'speciality' as men's tailoring or potted shrimps. The Sherlock Holmes stories reached and have never lost a position in the detective world which no other writer has approached. Conan Doyle himself hated Holmes. He tried to kill him at the Reichenbach falls, but there was a public outcry. City men went to their offices with *crêpe* bands tied round their hats.

The reader seeks in the novel a presentation of himself and the world of which he is a part, and perhaps most of all he wants to be entertained. That is why the works of writers like J. B. Priestley, H. E. Bates, Philip Gibbs, Dennis Wheatley and Nevil Shute are so popular. The reader does not want to be depressed or reformed, and consequently writers like Aldous Huxley and George Orwell do not reach a large public. People dislike being frightened and upset by novels, just as they do by plays.

Novels that have a spectacular success have a special quality that appeals to the public. *The Cruel Sea*, which has broken all bookselling records in the last quarter of a century, filled a real need. Here is a book that tells a heroic story of the Navy, of men who willingly offered their lives for their country, whose hearts and souls were in the battle England was waging for survival. So many novels of the war had concentrated on the sordid side of service life that *The Cruel Sea* came as a refreshing change. Readers appreciate a simple, commonsense attitude towards life, but they also like colour and action. That is why the novelists of the nineteenth century stand supreme: Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Trollope—all produce, above everything else, an enthralling story, superbly told. The great writers of the early twentieth century, Hardy, Bennett, Galsworthy, Wells, followed this tradition.

To-day, in this age of the common man, of mass production and restriction, when no one, least of all authors, may travel freely, novels have come to lack distinction and consequently are less widely read. There is a future awaiting the author who can produce a really funny novel—another *Three Men in a Boat* or *The Diary of a Nobody*. We have several satirical novelists, but, to please the reader, satire must be light and gay. Nancy Mitford's *Pursuit of Love* and *Love in a Cold Climate* have this quality and enchant a large public. Evelyn Waugh in his early books gave great pleasure. Unfortunately, in one of his latest novels he dealt with a subject which the general reading public found distasteful. *The Loved One* was a satirical story centering on the Crematoria and Gardens of Rest in America, the theme of which is a little too close to the sensibilities and conventions of people to have a wide appeal.

People are shocked by contemporary novels in which the conversation would not be suitable for polite society and authors should think of their personal reputation, as quite often people reading a novel will firmly believe that the language and morals spoken and used in the text must be those of the author who chooses to employ them. When the author has been long dead and become a classic, whatever his theme and his language, he is accepted, which explains the fact that large numbers of people made presents of Boswell's *London Journal* to their friends. Of course, polite conversation changes from generation to generation, and my father can remember when Elinor Glyn's *Three Weeks* was read in secrecy. People are shocked by outspoken books but many of them seem to like being shocked, although they feel ashamed to be seen reading books which enjoy a *succès de scandale*. Many people buying *Forever Amber* in our shop would ask for the jacket of Trevelyan's *English Social History* to wrap round it, so they might enjoy the book on the Underground.

Some great novelists for reasons unknown become unpopular with the public. Sir Walter Scott has been virtually unread for many years. Novels written in dialect, especially Scottish dialect, are most unpopular. People find it troublesome to the eye and irritating to the nerves.

The great dislike, among English readers, for continental fiction, which has existed for many years, is gradually disappearing. Books of all kinds, like *Don Camillo and the Prodigal Son*, Colette's *Cheri*, the de Maupassant stories and, of course, books of adventure like *The Kon-Tiki Expedition*, *Annapurna*, and the wonderful accounts of underwater exploration by Hans Hass and Jacques-Yves Cousteau are delighting a very large public in this country. The aversion to continental fiction existed for the most trivial reasons. The English are an insular people and did not care to read of people whose habits in dress, food and living generally were different from their own. Large numbers of English people travel abroad to-day, and their interest and curiosity have been awakened.

Of course, abroad English novels have always been read. With our great wealth of literature our books are translated into every living language. To continental readers the greatest ages in English history were largely the creation of the great writers who adorned them. Not many people outside England could name the politicians of Elizabethan times, but the names of Shakespeare, Sir Philip Sidney and Ben Jonson are household words the world over. The Victorian age, too, is largely the age of Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot and Tennyson. While political problems change from year to year, great writers teach the eternal truths.

It is not easy for England to produce great novelists to-day. In other times a writer could isolate himself from world events. Jane Austen could write her novels peacefully while the battle of Waterloo was raging. Now, when catastrophe comes, the writer is involved as is everyone else and he cannot pursue his art in peace. The responsibility for English letters has always been in the hands of the reading public. Whereas up to Victorian times the artisan who learned to read read precisely the same books as the educated, modern education has produced a vast population able to read but unable to distinguish what is worth reading. As a result, literature has been debased to please the millions of semi-educated people. This public sets the standard for the novelist and it is the lack of intelligent, discriminating response on the part of the public which compels writers to cheapen their ideals.

There is a growing tendency for people to read the great writers through potted digests. There is even talk of 'doing' Dickens and Robert Louis Stevenson in strip cartoons. However, there is one quality that every reader, educated or semi-literate, demands in a novel. That quality is sincerity. The reader can immediately detect pretence. The reader of serious novels may scoff at the high-coloured romances, so popular in the libraries, but let him never level at the author the criticism that a best selling book was written with the tongue in the cheek. Had it been so, the book would have been rejected by the public.

Although the public is remarkably loyal to its old favourites, Dornford Yates, Philip Gibbs, Daphne du Maurier, etc., there are quite definite fashions in books,

just as in clothes and architecture. Horace Walpole set a fashion that lasted perhaps a record time for macabre novels in a setting of graveyards and ruined castles with his *Castle of Otranto*. Books of this kind were read from 1764 until about 1800. Many of us can remember, in about 1928, the great vogue of novels about the First World War. Books like *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *The Case of Sergeant Grischa*, and *All Our Yesterdays* sold in thousands. In the early 'thirties the very long novel came into its own. The best sellers were Priestley's *Good Companions*, *Anthony Adverse*, *Northwest Passage* and *Gone with the Wind*. During the depressing days of the 1939-1945 war, people sought escape from the anxieties of life by reading the classics, and most popular of all were the novels of Anthony Trollope.

To-day, the most widely read books can be divided into three sections. First, the subject of the Royal family and everything connected with it—its tradition, lineage, palaces, and private life. Secondly, books of adventure. The adventure must be true and the writer an expert in his field. Given these two factors, an adventure with a story to tell is sure of a wide public to-day. Of course, *The Kon-Tiki Expedition* comes immediately to everybody's mind, but this wonderful book has been preceded and succeeded by many great narratives in the same tradition, such as *Elephant Bill*, *Annapurna*, *The Wooden Horse* and *The Naked Island*.

These two trends, the awakening of a people to its Royal heritage and the attraction of first-hand stories of courage and endurance give the cue to the novelist who provides the third kind of book that specially appeals to-day—the historical novel. Novelists have never been backward in recognizing the type of novel that a particular period demands. There is particular interest in Queens of England and in famous women of history: in the last year or so a whole string of novels about Queen Elizabeth, Mary Tudor, Emma Hamilton, the Empress Eugenie, Lady Arabella Stewart, Lucrezia Borgia, etc., have appeared, and every one, from the bookseller's point of view, has been a resounding success.

It is curious to note, by the way, that when an author dies he almost invariably suffers an eclipse, usually for about ten years, and then, if he has made his mark, he comes into his own. Even the greatest writers are temporarily forgotten. In my lifetime I have seen Arnold Bennett, Kipling and Galsworthy, best sellers until the day of their death, become quite neglected for about a decade. Then interest in them has gradually revived, critical studies and biographies have appeared and re-awakened interest, and to-day a new generation reads and delights in them and they have taken their place in English literature. In times of peace and times of war two writers are always read, wherever the English language is spoken, and they are Shakespeare and Dickens.

Every author, publisher and bookseller would like to know what makes a novel a best seller. Although writers believe strongly in the power of the reviewer, reviews of books, as of films, reflect rather than create public opinion. Occasionally, a reviewer will achieve eminence and will influence people so much that he can make a success of a book. Arnold Bennett was perhaps the last of these and

a column from him could make a book reach a 50,000 sale. He was responsible for the success of such books as *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and *Jew Süss*.

What really makes a book a best seller is word of mouth recommendation. The most valuable publicity a book can have is talk. Galsworthy always said he would rather have a dozen people discussing one of his books round a dinner table than a quarter page review in a Sunday paper. Booksellers know that a very high percentage of their customers ask for books that friends have recommended to them. The success of books like *The Story of San Michele*, *The Good Companions*, *The Kon-Tiki Expedition* and *The Cruel Sea* is largely due to people talking about them.

Many best sellers have been created by authors who feel compelled to write on a very unusual theme. When a writer has this deep interest in a particular subject he should not be deterred by people who tell him it will not be popular. If he is an accomplished writer he cannot fail to pass on this interest to his readers. Many books on the most surprising subjects, like Louis Golding's *Magnolia Street*, Betty Macdonald's *The Plague* and *The Egg and I*, and Michael Sadleir's *Fanny by Gaslight* have proved successful in spite of the strangeness of their theme.

Although booksellers are not really superstitious, there is a strong feeling in the trade that books on certain subjects are lucky—to mention a few, books about doctors, dogs or Abraham Lincoln always become popular and books whose title include the word 'valley' seem to be particularly blessed—*How Green Was My Valley*, *The Valley of Decision*, *The House in the Valley*, *The Valley of Fear*, and *Through the Valley*, have been outstandingly successful.

Another influence which has helped to start best sellers on their way is *The Readers' Digest*. This magazine reaches an enormous public and we notice that when a book has been condensed in its pages we are asked for it by people from every corner of the world.

Although it is often thought that best sellers are always works of fiction, it is really good household stuff that keeps publishers and booksellers solvent. Mrs. Beeton's *Cookery*, *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, *Pears Cyclopædia*—these books are worth far more, from the merely marketable point of view, than the most popular novel of the year.

One source of dismay to booksellers is the loss of some of our most entertaining writers, through their becoming absorbed in politics or religion. We are always being asked when Dorothy Sayers will write another thriller or Aldous Huxley and Evelyn Waugh another novel and A. P. Herbert another *Water Gipsies*. A great loss, too, to fiction that booksellers deplore is the passing of the illustrated novel. How satisfying it is to sit by the fire on a winter's evening reading your favourite Dickens with the Cruikshank illustrations, and has anyone given more delight than George du Maurier, illustrating his own novels? This art seems to remain only in our children's books.

Although publishers like to think that their efforts at producing a fine looking book and their flair in selecting their authors are noticed and admired by the public, I am afraid very few have succeeded in impressing their personalities

on the reader sufficiently to compel him to mention their name in requesting a book. The only firms who are really familiar to the public are Messrs. Batsford, Messrs. Mills & Boon and, of course, the incomparable Penguins. Naturally, in the world of books, among reviewers, writers and booksellers, one publisher always outshines the others. In the 'nineties it was John Lane; from 1910 to 1925, Chatto & Windus; from 1925 to 1935, Jonathan Cape, with Eric Linklater, Ernest Hemingway, T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Beverley Nichols, the Doolittle Books and Arthur Ransome.

Many people imagine that the wireless and television have a detrimental effect on reading, but, on the contrary, it is difficult to think of any change or invention of recent years that has done so much to encourage reading. Not only do we find that a book once broadcast or televised enjoys a large and immediate sale, but all the books written by that author are wanted and one is bound to conclude that the reading of books generally becomes more and more the average man's pleasure as a result of wireless and television.

It is the same with films. When a good film, like *Moulin Rouge*, *Quo Vadis*, or *The Cruel Sea*, appears, everyone wants to read the book. Surprisingly enough, however brilliantly directed and produced the film might be, I have yet to meet the author who felt it had done justice to his book. One writer told me that the film was so different from the original story that it had given him the plot for his new novel.

The book trade has some sly fun with the film tycoons of Hollywood. A few years ago, a new edition of Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* was published in the Modern Library series. To the surprise of the publishers, a letter arrived from a prominent Hollywood agency addressed to William Makepeace Thackeray, Esq. It read as follows: 'We have read your recent book, *The History of Henry Esmond, Esq.*, and believe it possessed material adaptable for motion pictures. We are recognized agents for writers at all studios and should like to represent you in the sale of your literary products. We would appreciate your advising us by return mail whether or not you are represented in Hollywood and in the event that you are not, we would be happy to forward you a copy of our agency agreement for your information and guidance'. The publisher, entering into the spirit of the thing, replied as follows: 'Thank you for your letter telling me that you believe my recent book, *The History of Henry Esmond*, possessed material adaptable for motion pictures. This effort is rather a crude attempt, I fear, but I am now working on a new novel which I think will be a natural medium for pictures. I am thinking of calling the new book *Vanity Fair*. I will be interested in hearing what you think of this title. Sincerely yours, William Makepeace Thackeray'.

It is easy to understand that, with its variety and interest, many people wish to work among books, but the good bookseller's assistant is hard to find. He must combine a real love for books with the ability to sell them. He must be prepared to sell books on every religion, on every shade of political opinion. Whatever his personal feelings about the books he is selling, he must never embarrass the customer. A good assistant will often criticize and express his

own feelings about a book, but always as one civilized man to another and never in such a way as to upset or discomfort.

We find that clergymen make quite excellent booksellers. A department particularly difficult to staff is that devoted to Spiritualism and the occult sciences. The books and the customers have a certain unsettling effect and after a month or two in this department it never surprises us if the assistant turns up in sandals and robes instead of ordinary clothes and grows a beard. We then transfer him to the technical department where engineers and plumbers soon restore his sense of proportion.

Customers in a bookshop are unfailingly interesting. They buy the most unexpected books. Old ladies will buy bloodthirsty thrillers, soldiers and sailors romantic love stories, and well-dressed business men girls' school stories. But in spite of the fact that appearances are deceptive, on the whole we find that what a man reads he is. People with the stuff of adventure in them enjoy adventure stories, and it is interesting that so many people who have the makings of a Napoleon have made a passionate study of Napoleon all their lives, among them Hitler, Northcliffe and Winston Churchill.

Of the vast numbers of people who come into our bookshop, three-quarters are men. Women still regard books as a reckless extravagance. The longer a customer takes in choosing a book, the cheaper it will be. Expensive books are bought quickly while in the grip of temptation. Many people are frightened to enter a bookshop and only come in a few times during their lifetime, usually to buy a book for an invalid friend. We notice that invalids express to their friends a desire for books read in their youth, such as Jeffrey Farnol, Marie Corelli and Rider Haggard.

We have a good opportunity of finding out the tastes in fiction of people from foreign countries and the more genuinely national a writer is the more popular he will be abroad. Authors like Dickens, Galsworthy and Hugh Walpole are very widely read. Some English writers are appreciated far more abroad than they are in England. Charles Morgan is very widely read in France, Jack London in Germany, and George Meredith and Henry James in Japan, while Oscar Wilde has always enjoyed a vast popularity on the continent. It is only during the last decade that he has been widely read in his own country.

It will surprise you to know that we receive a mail of about thirty thousand letters every day from all over the world, from people asking for the most extraordinary things—from a ticket for the Irish Sweep to a book on 'How to Poison without being found out'. We receive many hundreds of pounds by way of conscience money every year.

The appearance of books is becoming more important. The public is far more particular and discriminating and we notice an increase in the demand for finely bound books. This might lead to a revival in the art of fine binding. Beautiful binding has always flourished in an age when the monarch has led society. In the time of Charles II, of Louis XIV in France and George IV as Prince Regent, books were magnificently bound and they were one of the first of collected treasures among the wealthy. Since Queen Victoria's time, the craft of fine

binding has languished until there remain but two firms in the country specializing in it. In the last few years a new interest in the format of books is evident and might well be inspired by the new Elizabethan era.

Even with quite cheap books the public likes a nice-looking book that is pleasant to handle. The paper jacket of a novel is a very strong selling-point, and it should bear some relation to the contents of the book, otherwise people feel disappointed. The title of a book, too, should be chosen with care, as people hesitate to ask for something they cannot pronounce or understand. Books which would have enjoyed a much wider sale had their titles been more easy to pronounce are *Chiaroscuro*, by Augustus John, and *Eyeless in Gaza*, by Aldous Huxley. The mistakes people make when asking for these books are legion. Anyway, even with simple titles every day we get some 'howler'. We have been asked for 'The Decline and Fall of the Holborn Empire', Wordsworth's 'Ode to Immortality', 'Travels with a Monkey' and 'The Floss on the Mill'. One customer asked for 'Lady Chatterley's Daughter', to which another replied, 'I didn't know she had one'.

A bookseller's life is one of constant interest and pleasure, and no one who has once been associated with the world of books would care to exchange it. In Charing Cross Road we have perhaps more problems than elsewhere and suffer considerably from the depredation of the book thief. We stop on an average six people a day, leaving the shop without paying for the books they have taken—many of them, of course, are absent-minded. Also, in cold or wet weather Foyle's is the haunt of the browser and the gentleman of inelegant leisure. There is one bank clerk from nearby who has been coming in during his lunch-time for the last 17 years and has never yet bought a book. He has never taken a book and no one disturbs him, but he gets very annoyed if we sell the book he is reading and we have to find him another copy. At the moment he is reading *The Life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*. However, the bookseller's dealing with his readers is always a pleasure. He has the great good fortune of passing on the joy he has experienced to others and he lives in a bygone world as well as in the present and he knows the joy of having the best of life through all ages to fall back on.

I am grateful for the opportunity that has been given to me to voice something of the bookseller's point of view and, in conclusion, I should like to thank the Royal Society of Arts for the great privilege of delivering a Cantor Lecture. I am deeply honoured.

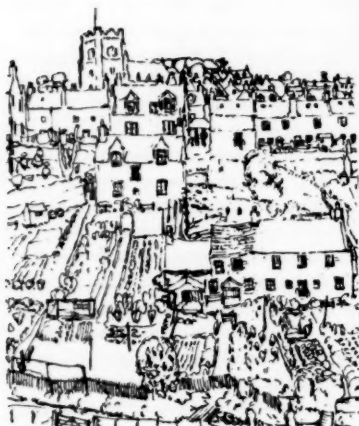
CORRIGENDA

Page 690 (line 5) *delete* Phœnicians *and substitute* Venetians.

Page 757 (line 8 from foot of page) *delete whole line*.

GENERAL NOTES

THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL IN RETROSPECT



Mr. W. G. Gillies's drawing of Kirriemuir, of which a detail is reproduced, and Renoir's pastel of two girls were shown in the Edinburgh Festival exhibitions of their art

Every August one wonders as one surveys—from the long breakfast room of the North British Hotel—the unfolding gardens of Princes Street and the Castle ramparts darkly fretted against the pale morning sky, if the Edinburgh Festival can possibly hold in store any visual thrill to compare with this exhilarating scene. That, of course, is to confuse aesthetic with natural delights. Both, nevertheless, may be enjoyed; and in addition to the crowded artistic programme that closed on September 12th, coach tours were arranged to the great houses and gardens about Edinburgh, while buses ran long into the night to let visitors see the jewelled city and the castle floodlit for the Military Tattoo. The northern capital, indeed, beckoned tourists as successfully as France, at a standstill, had deterred them.

The Festival may be said to have opened the moment Mr. T. S. Eliot alighted at the Waverley Station, and blandly confided his observations on *The Confidential Clerk* to the reporters. 'The play has no message to be read into it', he said in effect; 'rather I should say the play itself *is* the message, to be interpreted how you will'. That, of course, is just what any highly romantic artist might remark to-day of his painting to enquirers so constituted that they must be told precisely what a work of art means. Most dramatic critics, nevertheless, dislike any sort of mystification, and various were their interpretations of the purpose underlying the Lyceum piece, concerned with the question of human relationships, which develops situations of

Willean comic exaggeration and deepest tenderness. *The Confidential Clerk*—together with the valuable, if only partially successful experiment of the Old Vic's *Hamlet* presented Elizabethan-wise on the arena stage of the Assembly Hall—set the Festival drama off to a brisk pace in the first fortnight, which was more than maintained in the last week by the presentation at the Lyceum Theatre of *Richard II* by Jean Vilar and the Théâtre National Populaire.

Undoubtedly the most notable of the Glyndebourne operas was *The Rake's Progress*, the libretto by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman, and the modish music of the veteran Stravinsky matched by the stylish sets and dresses of Osbert Lancaster. The evening concerts, alas, I was unable to attend, having to content myself with glimpses of dinner-jacketed members of the Rome Radio Orchestra scurrying along George Street, bound for the spaghetti dishes at the Café Royal. Ballet, I should say, was served by the American National Ballet Theatre at the Empire; and of some two hundred films from thirty-five countries, shown to packed audiences throughout the period, the first to be shown (and I have no doubt among the sincerest) was a study of the life of *Martin Luther*, distinguished by the performance of Niall MacGinnis.

My particular quest, however, was the Art exhibitions, in which pursuit no other London art critics were encountered, most of them having apparently decided that the Festival was, after all, principally a feast of Music and Drama, and that the main exhibitions could well wait till they were shown at the Tate Gallery. There I think they were mistaken. The facsimiles of medieval Yugoslav frescoes were, it is true, ill shown in a dreary gallery and corridor of the Royal Scottish Museum, and will no doubt be more imaginatively displayed at the Tate. But part, at least, of the pleasure of attending the exhibition of Renoir's painting of all periods, with several bronzes executed by Guino under the crippled artist's guidance, lay in watching the enthusiastic crowds at the Scottish Academy, and overhearing comments from people to whom Renoir's emotional response to life, and warm and sensuous colour, were quite clearly revelations.

This summer, also, the exhibitions of native products supporting the main artistic offerings were more enterprising than most seen at previous Festivals. At 5 Charlotte Square, for instance, one could see a collection of water-colours and drawings by Mr. W. G. Gillies, the inspiring head of the Painting Department of the Edinburgh College of Art. Nor was it difficult, in these impressions of farmsteads and harbours, of Midlothian under grey or watery purple skies, drawn with a rapid nervous line, to sense (as his Scottish admirers do) a kinship with the poet Burns, 'simple, sensuous and passionate'. Again, at Gladstone's Land, Lawnmarket—an ancient building with a steep winding staircase, hardly suitable for exhibitions, and illustrating the city's need of a modern art gallery—an extremely interesting collection of the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh had been assembled. In Edwardian Glasgow he was not simply an *art nouveau* decorator, but also, and principally, an inventive architect, designer of Glasgow's School of Art and the dated audacities of its Willow Tea Rooms. Mackintosh was, in fact, a genuine if unlucky innovator, a Continental reputation not saving his eclipse after 1909 and a mounting heap of unrealized projects, among them a neo-Gothic Liverpool Cathedral with solid flying-buttresses. In the Society's Library may be found a thorough study of his work by Dr. Thomas Howarth, who arranged this exhibition with affectionate care.

Well, Edinburgh has now returned to normal. The foreign visitors have mostly departed, the unexpected uniforms disappeared, and the daily-changing table of Festival events gone from the office windows of the Scottish edition of the *Daily Mail*. But the artistic director, Mr. Ian Hunter, remains to plan next summer's Festival, with the various experiences of the past six years to guide him.

NEVILLE WALLIS

OBITUARY

SIR THOMAS TAYLOR

We record with regret the death of Sir Thomas Taylor, C.B.E., Principal of the University College of the South-West, Exeter.

His career as a teacher began at Oxford shortly after the First World War when he became a Fellow of Brasenose and tutor in chemistry to that College. He subsequently became the University Lecturer in Organic Chemistry, and a Rhodes Travelling Fellow. Sir Thomas was a member of the Council of the Chemical Society from 1936 to 1939, and in 1946 he was appointed to the new University College of the West Indies, of which he was head in its first six years of growth. A few months ago he left to take up the post he held at his death.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1950.

NOTES ON BOOKS

THE PENROSE ANNUAL, 1953. Edited by R. B. Fishenden. Lund Humphries. 30s

Penrose is, fittingly, a field of experiment for the typographer, and this year it has been designed by John Denison Hunt. The general pattern remains within the style we have come to associate with Lund Humphries. Mr. Hunt's *Penrose* is a particularly pleasant example of modern typography, with none of the irritating and eye-catching tricks that seem to come within the category. The text is printed in a new Monotype face, Times Book, a wider and rounder version of Times Roman.

The editor has arranged the text in the manner familiar from previous issues: his own introduction—a watchful survey of the year's progress; a group of articles dealing with the aesthetics of printing; a group of technical articles; illustrations; and advertisements.

Mr. Christian Barman writes on the return of illustration to books. He thinks we are on the eve of a revival of illustration, and I hope he is right, but I doubt it. I am sure he is wrong in asserting that typographers in general fight shy of illustrated books. I do not agree that publishers dislike illustration either. We have never in our time had so much illustration as when books were scarce and in demand, publishing risks reduced, and publishers consequently willing to spend more on their editions. A number of Mr. Barman's illustrations are derived from that period. Those days are over; costs are increased, and publishers are less willing to risk extra charges.

Mr. Brooke Crutchley writes on *Typography and Authorship*, by which he means essentially that the typographer is there to expound or enhance the author's work, a theory not, I think, seriously contradicted. There are some interesting specimen pages from books to demonstrate Mr. Crutchley's ideas—and among them a page on roof bosses which shows, I think, precisely how *not* to use Perpetua.

Mrs. Beatrice Warde militantly demands the suppression of the precise layout on the ground that it leaves no scope for the printer's imagination or artistic sense. I fear she is the champion of a lost cause. She views with apprehension—with indignation—the likelihood that the compositor will become a mere 'type-mason'. I see no reason why the printer should be ashamed of being a 'type-mason'—a great deal of technical skill is required of him; I wish he would stop pretending to be an artist or a designer, for he is clearly neither.

Christopher Sandford deals knowledgeably with press books—books produced by private presses, whether by hand or by power. The picture is, alas, a pale thing compared with earlier and greater days. We must not lose the amateur, however, and it seems that we shall not; there are more of them than I thought. If his methods

are often crude, and his work absurd, there is frequently freshness in his products, and something for the commercial world to learn.

Philip James, on the Arts Council and the Graphic Arts, shows abundantly, in text and illustration, that, typographically at least, the Council is alive and alert. Mr. Noel Carrington discusses the remarkable series of lithographs that suddenly blossomed on the walls and mirrors of Lyons tearshops—a bold innovation that assumed that the public at large would be interested in modern art. I wonder if it sold any tea or Swiss rolls. Probably not, and no doubt I am a Philistine to ask, but bless Mr. Felix Salmon for having it done. Eight of the posters are reproduced here in colour. Mr. Michael Rothenstein discusses a new approach to mechanical tints, a subject he has mentioned before. I do not think there is very much that is really new in his ideas, but he is stimulating in a field that has been little worked, and which, the cost of tints being what it is, will continue to be little worked.

The increasing importance of lithography is more and more evident in each issue of *Penrose*. It seems clear that the future of printing is planographic, though how soon lithography may become paramount it is hard to say. Its expansion is controlled, no doubt, by the delay in the arrival of the photo-composing machine. The Monotype machine seems to be ready, but I know of no printer using one commercially. Inter-type now describe a new photo-composing machine based on their slug machine, and it seems to be a winner. There are the usual efficient examples of composition reproduced for our inspection—but when will the machine be on the market? The prospect of an increased use of lithography seems to have given a fillip to experiment in lithography generally. Mr. A. C. B. Mathews describes a new roller which dampens and scavenges at the same time, by means of a spiral chromium and copper surface. Mr. William G. Mullen deals with an extremely interesting invention which he calls the air-doctor dampening system. It seems to offer, by means of a blast of air, a far more precise control of the damping of lithographic plates, and if the half-tone reproduction included is a typical example the result is a richer and livelier tone. Indeed, we are coming to a period in which lithography will be able to claim equality with letterpress in precisely those qualities in which letterpress is considered to be superior; and in Mr. R. Bottomley's article on the Primaton overlay for half-tone blocks and Mr. James Shand's on printing half-tones on uncoated papers, it amuses me to see the letterpress printer investing the enemy's camp.

There is always more in *Penrose* than any reviewer can deal with in the space he is given; and *Penrose* is always remarkable value. It is enough to add now that this is an exceptional issue.

SEÁN JENNETT

FROM THE JOURNAL OF 1853

VOLUME I. 16th September, 1853

From Miscellanea

A FLYING CHARIOT.—A model of a vehicle constructed for the purpose of aerial navigation has been deposited in the Exhibition at Dublin. It is the invention of Lord Carlingford and, in a communication to a friend, it is attempted to be proved that it fully bears out its right to the above appellation. It is said to have two expanding stationary wings to bear its weight, and two screw wings in front to draw it forward. It does not, however, appear to satisfy its inventor, who is about constructing another with improvements, which is to be much lighter. The scientific world are invited to contribute their mite of information.

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

AGRICULTURE AND GARDENING

FUSSELL, GEORGE EDWIN. Four centuries of farming systems in Dorset, 1500-1900; (reprinted from the Proceedings of the Dorset natural history and archeological society for 1951, vol. 73 . . . 1952).

FUSSELL, GEORGE EDWIN. Four centuries of farming systems in Hampshire, 1500-1900; (reprinted from proceedings of the Hampshire field club and archæological society, vol. xvii, part 3.) *Southampton, H. M. Gilbert & son*, 1952.

FUSSELL, GEORGE EDWIN. Four centuries of Lincolnshire farming; (reprinted from Reports and papers of the Lincolnshire architectural and archæological society, Vol. 4, pr. 2, 1952.) (Presented by the author.)

INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL ART AND DESIGN

BALLINGER, RAYMOND A. Lettering art in modern use. *New York, Reinhold publishing corporation*, 1952.

COUNCIL OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN. The crown and the royal arms: designs for use on the souvenirs of the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, 1953; [designed by Milner Gray]. *C.O.I.D., Coronation souvenirs committee*, 1952.

DEIGHTON, HAROLD. The art of lettering for students; including a simple system for beginners and chapters on the alphabet, monograms, and pen lettering. 2nd ed. *Batsford*, 1953.

ROTHERY, GUY CADOGAN. Decorators' symbols, emblems and devices . . . *Trade publishing co. ltd.*, 1907.

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM. Exhibition of Victorian and Edwardian decorative arts: catalogue. *H.M.S.O.*, 1952.

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM. Victorian and Edwardian decorative arts. *H.M.S.O.*, 1952.

ARCHITECTURE AND BUILDING

BRAUN, HUGH. Historical architecture: the development of structure and design. *Faber*, 1953.

DUTTON, RALPH. The age of Wren. *Batsford*, 1951.

KADLEIGH, SERGEI. High Paddington: a town for 8,000 people; designed by Sergei Kadleigh, assisted by Patrick Horsburgh. *Iliffe & sons ltd.*, 1952.

KNAPP-FISHER, ARTHUR BEDFORD. The future of church building. *Incorporated church building society*, 1951.

SMITH, HAROLD CLIFFORD. Buckingham Palace, its furniture, decoration and history . . . with introductory chapters on the building and site by Christopher Hussey. *Country life*, 1931.

WORTHINGTON, CLIFFORD. The influence of the cinema on contemporary auditoria design. *Pitman*, 1952.

CRAFTS AND LIGHT MANUFACTURES

AYRTON, MAXWELL, and SILCOCK, ARNOLD. Wrought iron and its decorative use. *Country life*, 1929.

CESCINSKY, HERBERT. English furniture of the eighteenth century. 3v. *George Sadler and company*, 1909-1911.

DAVENPORT, ELSIE GRACE. Your handspinning. *Sylvan press*, 1953.

FISHER, EIVOR, editor. Swedish embroidery. *Batsford*, for *Clark & co.*, 1953.

GARDNER, J. STARKIE. English ironwork of the xviith and xviiith centuries; an historical and analytical account of the development of exterior smithcraft . . . *Batsford*, [1911].

HUGHES, GEORGE BERNARD. More about collecting antiques. *Country life*, 1952. (Presented by the author.)

R

NO. 490

The
micro
regula
Journal
for ev
and o
compl
The
Micro

An
issue
sent
A pho
in the

' S

A l
in ac
Octob
Sessio
have
past,
have
this s
confe
or sp
list o
with